

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL OPORTO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

USMISSION NATO

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 6263

E.O. 11652: GDS

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SUBJ: CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

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SUMMARY: FORTY FIVE DAYS FROM ITS DECEMBER 5 DEADLINE, CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY (CA) HAS APPROVED ONLY THREE OF CONSTITUTIONS PROJECTED EIGHT TITLES AND MAY BE UNABLE TO COMPLETE ITS TASK ON TIME. RECENT SPECULATION THAT CA WILL BE CONVERTED DIRECTLY INTO A LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY WITHOUT HOLDING NEW ELECTIONS POINTS UP BODY'S POTENTIAL POLITICAL IMPORTANCE. SCHISM IN SOCIALIST ASSEMBLY DELEGATION HAS LED TO MARIO SOARES' RETURN TO CA. END SUMMARY

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1. ASSEMBLY'S PROGRESS: CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY COMPLETED DEBATE ON TITLE III (ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS AND DUTIES) OF THE CONSTITUTION ON OCTOBER 22. FIVE MORE TITLES REMAIN TO BE APPROVED BY DECEMBER 5, WHEN PERIOD SET BY LAW FOR CA TO DRAFT CONSTITUTION WILL EXPIRE. DELAYS ENCOUNTERED IN TITLE III DEBATE, HOWEVER, AND PROSPECT OF TOUGH BATTLE OVER TITLES IV (ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION) AND V (POLITICAL ORGANIZATION) MAKE IT INCREASINGLY UNLIKELY THAT CA WILL BE ABLE TO COMPLETE CONSTITUTION ON TIME WITHOUT GOING TO NIGHT-TIME OR MONDAY SESSIONS. SUCH MEASURES WOULD BE UNPOPULAR WITH MANY CA DELEGATES, HOWEVER, AND RATHER THAN ADOPT THEM CA WOULD PROBABLY REQUEST FROM PRESIDENT OF REPUBLIC AN ADDITIONAL 30 TO 90 DAYS TO COMPLETE ITS TASK.

2. DIRECT CONVERSION?: ANOTHER POSSIBILITY, WHICH HAS BEEN THE SUBJECT OF INCREASING SPECULATION SINCE IT WAS BROACHED IN A RECENT INTERVIEW BY PRIME MINISTER AZEVEDO, WOULD BE FOR REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL TO GRANT CA AN UNLIMITED PERIOD OF TIME TO COMPLETE ITS WORK, AFTER WHICH ASSEMBLY WOULD BE CONVERTED DIRECTLY INTO A NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY WITHOUT HOLDING NEW ELECTIONS. SUCH A MOVE, IT IS ARGUED, WOULD SPARE THE COUNTRY TRAUMA OF MAJOR ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN.

3. SOCIALIST SCHISM: DEBATE ON TITLE BROUGHT TO LIGHT SERIOUS SCHISM IN SOCIALIST PART (PS) ASSEMBLY DELEGATION. PS REPRESENTATIVES ON COMMITTEE DESIGNATED TO PREPARE TITLE III DRAFT WERE FROM PARTY'S MINORITY DOGMATIC MARXIST WING. THEY COOPERATED WITH COMMUNISTS (PCP) AND FELLOW-TRAVELLING PORTUGUESE DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT (MDP) IN COMMITTEE TO PRODUCE DRAFT WHICH PROVIDED FOR, INTER ALIA, WORKER CONTROL OF MANAGEMENT, STATE SUPERVISION AND EVENTUAL ABSORPTION OF PRIVATE MEDICINE AND EDUCATION, AND PARTICIPATION OF "POPULAR" ORGANIZATIONS IN ADMINISTRATION OF STATE HEALTH PROGRAMS AND REORGANIZATION OF MEANS OF PRODUCTION. SUCH PROVISIONS PROVED REPUGNANT NOT ONLY TO POPULAR DEMOCRATS AND SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC CENTER (CDS), BUT ALSO TO LARGE "PRAGMATIC" FACTION IN PS DELEGATION AND TO PARTY'S NATIONAL LEADERSHIP, WHICH FEARED PS IDENTIFICATION WITH PROVISION WOULD HAVE ADVERSE EFFECT ON ITS ELECTORAL IMAGE. AFTER CONSIDERABLE BICKERING, PS DELEGATION BACKED ITS DRAFTING COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES ON QUESTION OF WORKERS CONTROL, BUT IN FINAL STAGES OF PLENARY CONFIDENTIAL

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DEBATE, "PRAGMATISTS" CLEARLY HAD UPPER HAND; SOCIALISTS THEMSELVES SPONSORED PROPOSALS TO TONE DOWN OR DELETE PROVISIONS ON STATE CONTROL OF EDUCATION AND MEDICINE. TO RESTORE DETERIORATING PARTY COHESION AND DISCIPLINE, PS ANNOUNCED ON OCT 14 THAT PARTY SECRETARY-GENERAL MARIO SOARES WOULD TAKE ADVANTAGE OF RECENTLY PASSED LAW AND RETURN TO CA. SOARES FORMALLY TOOK UP LEADERSHIP OF PS ASSEMBLY DELEGATION FOLLOWING DAY.

4. PRE-AGENDA DEBATE:

COMMUNISTS EARLY OCTOBER RETURN TO DAILY PRE-AGENDA DEBATE PERIOD ON TOPICS OF NATIONAL INTEREST HAS PRODUCED FEW SURPRISES. PCP HAS SINCE LAUNCHED DAILY ATTACKS AGAINST PPD AND VARIOUS POLICIES OF AZEVEDO GOVERNMENT. PPD HAS RETURNED COMMUNIST BRICKBATS AND, ALONG WITH SOCIALISTS, PRAISED AZEVEDO'S EFFORTS TO RESTORE PUBLIC ORDER AND MILITARY DISCIPLINE.

5. COMMENT: SOARES' RETURN TO CA WILL GIVE SOCIALISTS BADLY NEEDED DIRECTION AND LEADERSHIP, AND SHOULD SMOOTH OUT DEBATES SOMEWHAT, ALLOWING THEM TO PROCEED MORE RAPIDLY. IT WILL ALSO ENHANCE PRE-AGENDA DEBATE PERIOD'S STANDING AS A FORUM FOR NATIONAL POLITICAL DEBATE. SPECULATION ON CONVERSION OF CA INTO LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY POINTS UP ITS POTENTIAL IMPORTANCE AS AN ACTOR IN PORTUGUESE POLITICAL DRAMA. PPD AND CDS, BOTH OF WHICH EXPECT TO IMPROVE THEIR PARLIAMENTARY POSITION AS A RESULT OF NEW ELECTIONS, WOULD OPPOSE CONVERSION; PCP AND MDP, ON THE OTHER HAND, WHICH WOULD CERTAINLY LOSE GROUND IN NEW ELECTIONS, CAN BE COUNTED ON TO SUPPORT SUCH A MOVE. PS SPOKESMAN RECENTLY TOLD EMBOFF THAT PS HAD NOT AS YET TAKEN STAND ON CONVERSION ISSUE.

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